

PATENT COOPERATION TREATY

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NOTIFICATION OF ELECTION

(PCT Rule 61.2)

From the INTERNATIONAL BUREAU

To:

Assistant Commissioner for Patents
 United States Patent and Trademark
 Office
 Box PCT
 Washington, D.C.20231
 ETATS-UNIS D'AMERIQUE

in its capacity as elected Office

Date of mailing (day/month/year) 14 June 2000 (14.06.00)	
International application No. PCT/IB99/01676	Applicant's or agent's file reference F14602 LVDW
International filing date (day/month/year) 14 October 1999 (14.10.99)	Priority date (day/month/year) 15 October 1998 (15.10.98)
Applicant DE RONDE, Jacoba, Adriana et al	

1. The designated Office is hereby notified of its election made:



in the demand filed with the International Preliminary Examining Authority on:

12 May 2000 (12.05.00)



in a notice effecting later election filed with the International Bureau on:

2. The election ☒ was

was not

made before the expiration of 19 months from the priority date or, where Rule 32 applies, within the time limit under Rule 32.2(b).

The International Bureau of WIPO 34, chemin des Colombettes 1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland Facsimile No.: (41-22) 740.14.35	Authorized officer Juan Cruz Telephone No.: (41-22) 338.83.38
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PATENT COOPERATION TREATY

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INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION REPORT

(PCT Article 36 and Rule 70)

Applicant's or agent's file reference F14602 LVDW	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div>FOR FURTHER ACTION</div> <div>See Notification of Transmittal of International Preliminary Examination Report (Form PCT/IPEA/416)</div> </div>	
International application No. PCT/IB99/01676	International filing date (<i>day/month/year</i>) 14/10/1999	Priority date (<i>day/month/year</i>) 15/10/1998
International Patent Classification (IPC) or national classification and IPC C12N15/82		
Applicant PROTEIN RESEARCH TRUST et al		

1. This international preliminary examination report has been prepared by this International Preliminary Examining Authority and is transmitted to the applicant according to Article 36.


2. This REPORT consists of a total of 6 sheets, including this cover sheet.

- ☒ This report is also accompanied by ANNEXES, i.e. sheets of the description, claims and/or drawings which have been amended and are the basis for this report and/or sheets containing rectifications made before this Authority (see Rule 70.16 and Section 607 of the Administrative Instructions under the PCT).

These annexes consist of a total of 4 sheets.

3. This report contains indications relating to the following items:

- I ☒ Basis of the report
- II ☐ Priority
- III ☒ Non-establishment of opinion with regard to novelty, inventive step and industrial applicability
- IV ☐ Lack of unity of invention
- V ☒ Reasoned statement under Article 35(2) with regard to novelty, inventive step or industrial applicability; citations and explanations supporting such statement
- VI ☐ Certain documents cited
- VII ☐ Certain defects in the international application
- VIII ☒ Certain observations on the international application

Date of submission of the demand 12/05/2000	Date of completion of this report 26.01.2001
Name and mailing address of the international preliminary examining authority:  European Patent Office D-80298 Munich Tel. +49 89 2399 - 0 Tx: 523656 epmu d Fax: +49 89 2399 - 4465	Authorized officer Armandola, E Telephone No. +49 89 2399 7493



**INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY
EXAMINATION REPORT**

International application No. PCT/IB99/01676

I. Basis of the report

1. This report has been drawn on the basis of *(substitute sheets which have been furnished to the receiving Office in response to an invitation under Article 14 are referred to in this report as "originally filed" and are not annexed to the report since they do not contain amendments (Rules 70.16 and 70.17).)*:

Description, pages:

1-13 as originally filed

Claims, No.:

1-24 with telefax of 27/09/2000

Drawings, sheets:

1/5-5/5 as originally filed

2. With regard to the **language**, all the elements marked above were available or furnished to this Authority in the language in which the international application was filed, unless otherwise indicated under this item.

These elements were available or furnished to this Authority in the following language: , which is:

- ☐ the language of a translation furnished for the purposes of the international search (under Rule 23.1(b)).
- ☐ the language of publication of the international application (under Rule 48.3(b)).
- ☐ the language of a translation furnished for the purposes of international preliminary examination (under Rule 55.2 and/or 55.3).

3. With regard to any **nucleotide and/or amino acid sequence** disclosed in the international application, the international preliminary examination was carried out on the basis of the sequence listing:

- ☐ contained in the international application in written form.
- ☐ filed together with the international application in computer readable form.
- ☐ furnished subsequently to this Authority in written form.
- ☐ furnished subsequently to this Authority in computer readable form.
- ☐ The statement that the subsequently furnished written sequence listing does not go beyond the disclosure in the international application as filed has been furnished.
- ☐ The statement that the information recorded in computer readable form is identical to the written sequence listing has been furnished.

4. The amendments have resulted in the cancellation of:

- ☐ the description, pages:
- ☐ the claims, Nos.:

**INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY
EXAMINATION REPORT**

International application No. PCT/IB99/01676

☐ the drawings, sheets:

5. ☐ This report has been established as if (some of) the amendments had not been made, since they have been considered to go beyond the disclosure as filed (Rule 70.2(c)):

(Any replacement sheet containing such amendments must be referred to under item 1 and annexed to this report.)

6. Additional observations, if necessary:

III. Non-establishment of opinion with regard to novelty, inventive step and industrial applicability

1. The questions whether the claimed invention appears to be novel, to involve an inventive step (to be non-obvious), or to be industrially applicable have not been examined in respect of:

☐ the entire international application.

☒ claims Nos. 23, 24.

because:

☐ the said international application, or the said claims Nos. relate to the following subject matter which does not require an international preliminary examination (*specify*):

☒ the description, claims or drawings (*indicate particular elements below*) or said claims Nos. 23, 24 are so unclear that no meaningful opinion could be formed (*specify*):
see separate sheet

☐ the claims, or said claims Nos. are so inadequately supported by the description that no meaningful opinion could be formed.

☐ no international search report has been established for the said claims Nos. .

2. A meaningful international preliminary examination report cannot be carried out due to the failure of the nucleotide and/or amino acid sequence listing to comply with the standard provided for in Annex C of the Administrative Instructions:

☐ the written form has not been furnished or does not comply with the standard.

☐ the computer readable form has not been furnished or does not comply with the standard.

V. Reasoned statement under Article 35(2) with regard to novelty, inventive step or industrial applicability; citations and explanations supporting such statement

1. Statement

Novelty (N)

Yes: Claims 1-18

**INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY
EXAMINATION REPORT**

International application No. PCT/IB99/01676

	No:	Claims	19-22
Inventive step (IS)	Yes:	Claims	1-18
	No:	Claims	19-22
Industrial applicability (IA)	Yes:	Claims	1-22
	No:	Claims	

2. Citations and explanations
see separate sheet

VIII. Certain observations on the international application

The following observations on the clarity of the claims, description, and drawings or on the question whether the claims are fully supported by the description, are made:
see separate sheet

Re Item III

Non-establishment of opinion with regard to novelty, inventive step and industrial applicability

No opinion was established on the subject-matter of Claims 23, 24 because of lack of clarity. The phrasing "...substantially as herein described and illustrated." does not clearly define the subject-matter claimed. Moreover, reference to the description and figures should be avoided (see PCT Guidelines CIII-4.10). Under these circumstances no meaningful evaluation with respect to novelty and inventive step can be made.

Re Item V

Reasoned statement under Article 35(2) with regard to novelty, inventive step or industrial applicability; citations and explanations supporting such statement

Reference is made to the following document:

D1: WO 97 48814 A (MONSANTO CO) 24 December 1997 (1997-12-24)

Novelty and Inventive step (Art. 33(2)(3) PCT)

i) Claims 1-18 can be considered novel and inventive because a method for obtaining a genetically transformed plant by contacting an *Agrobacterium* strain with a germinating plant seed in the presence of a surfactant or a wetting agent has not been disclosed in the available prior art. *Agrobacterium* has been employed for the transformation of plant embryonic tissue (see e.g. D1), but no hint can be found that would lead the skilled person to attempting the transformation of germinating seeds with reasonable expectation of success.

ii) Claims 19-22 cannot be considered novel for the following reasons:
a product is not rendered novel merely by the fact that it is produced through a new process; therefore, any disclosure encompassing a transgenic plant or seed is prejudicial to the novelty of the claims (e.g. D1). This objection applies to countries in which product

**INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY
EXAMINATION REPORT - SEPARATE SHEET**

International application No. PCT/IB99/01676

by process claims are not allowable and would then be prosecuted in regional phase in these countries.

Re Item VIII

Certain observations on the international application

Claims 23 and 24 are vague and unclear. The phrasing "...substantially as herein described and illustrated." does not clearly define the subject-matter claimed. Moreover, reference to the description and figures should be avoided (see PCT Guidelines CIII-4.10). In the specific case the references to the description and figures also render the claims redundant, because they essentially summarize the contents of Claims 1-25.

CLAIMS:

1. A method for obtaining transformed or genetically modified plant seed, the method including contacting germinating plant seed with a wetting agent or surfactant and an *Agrobacterium* strain to transform or genetically modify the plant seed.

2. A method as claimed in claim 1, in which the wetting agent or surfactant is a non-oil based wetting agent or surfactant.

3. A method as claimed in claim 1 or claim 2, in which the wetting agent or surfactant includes a polyether polymethyl siloxane copolymer.

4. A method as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, in which the *Agrobacterium* strain and the wetting agent or surfactant are in the form of an admixture, the wetting agent or surfactant and the *Agrobacterium* strain being present in the admixture in a mass ratio of the wetting agent or surfactant: *Agrobacterium* strain of between 1:99 and 1:10000.

5. A method as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, in which the germinating plant seed are subjected to vacuum infiltration while they are being contacted with the wetting agent or surfactant and the *Agrobacterium* strain.

6. A method as claimed in claim 5, in which the germinating plant seed are subjected to vacuum infiltration for a period of between 5 minutes and 40 minutes, at a pressure of between 150 Pa (a) and 750 Pa (a).

7. A method as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, in which the germinating plant seed are contacted with the wetting agent or surfactant and

the *Agrobacterium* strain for a period of between 2 hours and 48 hours, at a temperature of between 15 °C and 35 °C.

8. A method as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, in which the *Agrobacterium* strain is *Agrobacterium tumefaciens*.

5 9. A method as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, in which the *Agrobacterium* strain includes a foreign gene which includes appropriate regulatory sequences so as to be expressed in the cells of a plant which is cultivated from the transformed or genetically modified plant seed.

10 10. A method as claimed in claim 9, in which the foreign gene confers at least one of disease resistance and drought resistance to the plant which is cultivated from the transformed or genetically modified plant seed.

11. A method as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, in which the *Agrobacterium* strain includes a plasmid comprising vector pBI121.

15 12. A method as claimed in claim 9 or claim 10, in which the *Agrobacterium* strain includes a plasmid which includes both said foreign gene and a selection agent resistance gene, the selection agent resistance gene also including appropriate regulatory sequences so as to be expressed in the cells of the plant which is cultivated from the transformed or genetically modified plant seed.

20 13. A method as claimed in claim 12, in which the selection agent resistance gene codes for antibiotic resistance, thus imparting resistance to an antibiotic selection agent to the plant which is cultivated from the transformed or genetically modified plant seed.

14. A method as claimed in claim 13, in which the antibiotic selection agent is selected from the group consisting of at least one of kanamycin and rifampicin, and in which the selection agent resistance gene is a GUS-intron gene.

5 15. A method as claimed in any and of the preceding claims, in which the plant seed is from the family *leguminosae*.

16. A method as claimed in claim 15, in which the plant seed is soybean seed.

17. A method as claimed in claim 15, in which the plant seed is lupin seed.

10 18. A method as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, which includes germinating plant seed at a temperature of between 22 °C and 32 °C, for a period of between 2 days and 5 days, before contacting the germinating plant seed with the wetting agent or surfactant and the *Agrobacterium* strain.

15 19. A transformed or genetically modified plant seed produced by the method as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 18 inclusive.

20. A transformed or genetically modified plant cultivated from the plant seed as claimed in claim 19.

21. A plant seed produced by the transformed or genetically modified plant as claimed in claim 20.

20 22. A plant which is the progeny of a transformed or genetically modified plant as claimed in claim 20.

23. A method for obtaining transformed or genetically modified plant seed as claimed in claim 1, substantially as herein described and illustrated.

24. A new method for obtaining transformed or genetically modified plant seed, a new plant seed, or a new plant, substantially as herein described.

PCTWORLD INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ORGANIZATION
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INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

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(72) Inventors; and		Published <i>With international search report.</i> <i>Before the expiration of the time limit for amending the claims and to be republished in the event of the receipt of amendments.</i>	
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(54) Title: TRANSFORMATION PROCESS ✓			
(57) Abstract <p>A method for obtaining transformed or genetically modified plant seed includes contacting germinating plant seed with a wetting agent or surfactant and an <i>Agrobacterium</i> strain to transform or genetically modify the plant seed. The invention also extends to a transformation composition which includes, in admixture, an <i>Agrobacterium</i> strain and a wetting agent or surfactant.</p>			

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TRANSFORMATION PROCESS

THIS INVENTION relates to a method for obtaining transformed or genetically modified plant seed. It also relates to a transformation composition.

5 According to one aspect of the invention there is provided a method for obtaining transformed or genetically modified plant seed, the method including contacting germinating plant seed with a wetting agent or surfactant and an *Agrobacterium* strain to transform or genetically modify the plant seed.

10 The wetting agent or surfactant may be any suitable wetting agent or surfactant which facilitates or enhances penetration and transformation of germinating plant seed by the *Agrobacterium* strain. As hereinafter used, the term "wetting agent" includes surfactants with wetting properties. The wetting agent may be a non-oil based wetting agent, and may include a polyether polymethyl siloxane copolymer. One example of a suitable wetting agent is Break-Thru (available from Goldschmidt Chemical Corporation in Hopewell, USA).
15 It is believed that the active component of Break-Thru is polyether polymethyl siloxane copolymer, Break-Thru being a non-oil wetting agent.

The *Agrobacterium* strain and the wetting agent may be in the form of an admixture or suspension. The wetting agent and the *Agrobacterium* strain may be present in the admixture in a mass ratio of the wetting agent: *Agrobacterium* strain of between 1:99 and 1:10000, e.g. 1:1000.

5 The germinating plant seed may be subjected to vacuum infiltration while they are being contacted with the wetting agent and the *Agrobacterium* strain. The germinating plant seed may be subjected to vacuum infiltration for a period of between 5 minutes and 40 minutes, e.g. 20 minutes, at a pressure of between 150 Pa (a) and 750 Pa (a), e.g. 585 Pa (a). The vacuum infiltration may
10 be carried out at a temperature of between 15 °C and 35 °C, e.g. 25 °C.

The germinating plant seed may then be contacted with the admixture for a period of between 2 hours and 48 hours, e.g. 24 hours, at a temperature of between 15 °C and 35 °C, e.g. room or ambient temperature.

The *Agrobacterium* strain may be any suitable strain such as
15 *Agrobacterium tumefaciens*, for example, *Agrobacterium tumefaciens* strain LBA4404 deposited at Centraalbureau voor Schimmel-cultures (CBS) in the Netherlands under No. CBS 191.83 on 24 February 1983.

The germinating plant seed may be transformed by the introduction of foreign DNA via the *Agrobacterium* strain. Thus, the germinating plant seed
20 may be transformed by exposing or contacting the germinating plant seed with a culture of *Agrobacterium*, said *Agrobacterium* strain being transformation competent and including a construct comprising a foreign gene, the foreign gene including appropriate regulatory sequences so as to be expressed in the cells of a plant which is cultivated from the transformed or genetically modified plant
• 25 seed.

The foreign gene may be any suitable gene, such as a foreign gene which confers disease resistance and/or drought resistance to the plant which is cultivated from the transformed or genetically modified plant seed.

The *Agrobacterium* strain may include a suitable plasmid to facilitate transformation of the plant seed.

The plasmid may include a vector, such as vector pBI121.

The method may include inducing further growth of the transformed plant seed and selecting for a transformant in the presence of a selecting agent. The *Agrobacterium* strain may include a plasmid which includes both said foreign gene and a selection agent resistance gene, the selection agent resistance gene also including appropriate regulatory sequences so as to be expressed in the cells of the plant which is cultivated from the transformed or genetically modified plant seed.

The selection agent resistance gene may code for antibiotic resistance, thus imparting resistance to an antibiotic selection agent to the plant which is cultivated from the transformed or genetically modified plant seed. The antibiotic selection agent may be selected from the group consisting of at least one of kanamycin and rifampicin, and the selection agent resistance gene may be a GUS-intron gene.

It will be appreciated that any suitable plant seed may be transformed using the method as herein described. The plant seed may be from the family *Leguminosae* or any other dicotyledonous plant, for example, soybean or lupin seed. If soybean seed is used, the soybean seed may be allowed to germinate until it has a small plumule, easily removable seed coat and cotyledons which are not appressed against each other before the germinating soybean seed is contacted with the wetting agent and the *Agrobacterium* strain. If lupin seed

is used, the lupin seed may be allowed to germinate until the plumule is between 10 - 20 mm in size, before the germinating lupin seed is contacted with the wetting agent and the *Agrobacterium* strain.

The method may include germinating plant seed at a temperature of between 22 °C and 32 °C, e.g. about 29 °C, for a period of between 2 days and 5 days, e.g. about 4 days before contacting the germinating plant seed with the wetting agent and the *Agrobacterium* strain.

The invention extends to a transformed or genetically modified plant seed produced by the method as herein before described, to a transformed or genetically modified plant cultivated from said plant seed, to a plant seed produced by said transformed or genetically modified plant, and to a plant which is the progeny of said transformed or genetically modified plant.

The transformed or genetically modified plant may comprise cells which comprise in their genome at least one preselected foreign gene which produces a foreign cellular product encoded by the foreign gene. The foreign gene may code for at least one of disease resistance and drought resistance.

According to another aspect of the invention, there is provided a transformation composition which includes, in admixture, an *Agrobacterium* strain and a wetting agent.

The wetting agent may be a non-oil based wetting agent. The wetting agent may include a polyether polymethyl siloxane copolymer, and the *Agrobacterium* strain may be *Agrobacterium tumefaciens*.

The wetting agent and the *Agrobacterium* strain may be present in a mass ratio of the wetting agent: *Agrobacterium* strain of between 1:99 and 1:10000, e.g. 1:1000.

The invention will now be described by way of non-limiting example, with reference to the following Figures and examples of methods of transforming plant seed, in accordance with the invention.

Figure 1A shows X-GLUC histochemical localization of GUS enzyme activity in GUS transformed soybean cultivar Carnia 2233 leaf tissue;

Figure 1B shows X-GLUC histochemical localization of GUS enzyme activity in GUS transformed soybean cultivar Carnia 2233 root tissue;

Figure 2 shows X-GLUC histochemical localization of GUS enzyme activity in GUS-INT transformed soybean cultivar Carnia 2233 stomata;

Figure 3 shows the effect of mannitol stress on proline synthesis in third generation transformed soybean cultivar Carnia 2233 with an antisense P5CR construct.

Figure 4 shows a woodenbox screening of control soybean cultivar Carnia 2233 (without *Arabidopsis* P5CR gene) compared to transformed soybean cultivar Carnia 2233 (containing P5CR gene in antisense orientation);

Figure 5A shows the effect of higher copy number of P5CR gene on chlorophyll fluorescence in transformed soybean cultivar Ibis plants (normalised normal plant = NN; normalised transformant antisense orientation = NT AS);

Figure 5B shows the effect of higher or lower copy number of P5CR gene on chlorophyll fluorescence in transformed Ibis plants (normalised transformed antisense = NT AS; normalised transformed sense = NT S; normalised normal plant = NN); and

Figure 6 shows transformed lupin leaves of initial transformed seed, together with first generation seed compared to control plants leaves and seeds.

EXAMPLE 1

Agrobacterium tumefaciens strain LBA4404 containing a CaMV 35S GUS gene (pBI121) was cultured at 27°C in 100 ml Luria-Bertani broth (LB) pH 7.00 supplemented with 150µg/ml rifampicin and 100µg/ml kanamycin until an

absorbance of $A_{600} = 0.5$ was obtained. 0.01 mg/ml Acetosyringone was added to the *Agrobacterium tumefaciens* culture approximately 24 hours before transformation of plant seeds was carried out. The *Agrobacterium tumefaciens* culture was centrifuged at 10000 rpm for 20 minutes at a temperature of 10°C. Flocculation was avoided or inhibited by dilution of the *Agrobacterium tumefaciens* culture with distilled water to obtain a ratio of *Agrobacterium tumefaciens* : distilled water of 1:4. 0.1% Break-Thru (a wetting agent) (obtainable from Goldschmidt Chemical Corporation) was added to the diluted *Agrobacterium tumefaciens* culture.

Soybean seed (Carnia 2233) was sterilised for 5 minutes in 3.5% (v/v) NaOCl, and then washed in sterile water before being germinated on sterile 0.8% water agar at a temperature of 29°C for a period of 2 to 5 days. The germinating soybean seeds were then sorted and soybean seeds having a small plumule, easily removable seed coat and cotyledons which were not appressed against each other, were selected. The selected germinating or germinated soybean seeds were then contacted with the *Agrobacterium*/wetting agent suspension and vacuum infiltrated for 20 minutes under a pressure of 78 millitorr. After vacuum infiltration, the germinating soybean seeds were then incubated for a further period of 24 hours in contact with the *Agrobacterium*/wetting agent suspension solution at room or ambient temperature to obtain transformed soybean seeds. The transformed soybean seeds were then planted in a soil mixture comprising soil, sand, vermiculite (5:5:3) and grown in a greenhouse to obtain transformed soybean plants. The success rate of transformation was determined by GUS-gene activity using a fluorometric and a histochemical assay.

When the transformed plants had developed a second set of leaves, a leaf from the main apex was tested for expression of the GUS gene. A fluorometric GUS assay (Jefferson, R.A., Kavanagh, T.A. & Bevan, M.W. 1987). GUS fusion β -glucuronidase as a sensitive and versatile gene fusion marker in

higher plants. *EMBO J.* 6 (13): 3901-3907 was used for screening of all explants for the expression of glucuronidase enzyme. 100 μ l sodium phosphate buffer was pipetted into the wells of a microtiter plate. The assay buffer contained 50 mM NaPO_4 (pH7.00), 10mM EDTA, 0.1% (v/v) Triton X-100, 10mM mercapto ethanol and 2 M methyl umbelliferyl glucuronide (Sigma). Small pieces of plant tissue were crushed in this buffer and incubated overnight at a temperature of 37°C in the dark. Reactions were visualised on a long wave length UV light box. A histochemical assay was also performed in testing putative transformants. Plant tissue, which tested positive in the fluorescence assay, was incubated overnight at a temperature of 37°C in the dark in a histochemical staining solution. The staining solution contained 50mM NaPO_4 (pH7.00), 0.1% (v/v) Triton X-100, 1.04 mM X-Gluc and 0.5% (v/v) DMSO. The plant tissue was subsequently washed in FAA for 10 minutes, followed with a wash in 50% ethanol. The tissue was dehydrated with 100% ethanol and hydrated slowly up to 100% H_2O .

Transformed soybean plants (TO = plants obtained from initial transformed seed; T1, T2 and T3 = plants obtained from self pollinated, first to third generation, transformed plants) were tested for GUS activity and positive results were obtained indicating transformation. GUS expression patterns of soybean cultivar Carnia 2233 transformed with the CaMV 35S gene, were thus observed in leaf (Figure 1A) and root (Figure 1B) tissue of the plant. Plants tested positive for the GUS gene up to the third generation.

To verify the insertion of the GUS gene in the plant genome, molecular analysis, i.e. PCR reaction as well as a Southern blot procedure (Maniatis, T. Fritsch, E.F. & Sambrook, J., 1982. *Molecular Cloning : A Laboratory Manual*. Cold Spring Harbour Laboratory Press, Cold Spring Harbour, H.Y.), were conducted with GUS and NPTII specific primers. PCR and Southern blot observations indicated the presence of the GUS gene in the soybean genome. Plants tested positive up to the third transformant generation.

EXAMPLE 2

In another embodiment of the invention using essentially the same methods and techniques as described in Example 1, soybean seed (Carnia 2233) was transformed using an *Agrobacterium* strain LBA4404 containing a p35S GUS INT gene. It will be appreciated that a GUS-intron gene has the ability to discriminate between prokaryotic organisms such as *Agrobacterium tumefaciens* and eukaryotic organisms such as plants. Only plant tissue containing the GUS-INT gene turns blue in colour in association with a histochemical assay. Any *Agrobacterium* possibly still present in the plant tissue does not turn blue in colour. Figure 2 shows transformed plant cells which have been stained with X-GLUC, indicating that the soybean seed was transformed with the GUS-intron gene and that the GUS activity does not arise from endogenous *Agrobacteria*.

EXAMPLE 3

In a further embodiment of the invention using essentially the same methods and techniques described above for Example 1, soybean seed (Carnia 2233) was transformed with an antisense construct of a proline gene (L-D¹-pyrroline-5-carboxylate reductase = P5CR). The proline gene P5CR was obtained from N. Verbruggen, Laboratory of Genetics, University of Gent, Belgium. The P5CR gene was cloned in antisense orientation into plasmid HB101pMA445, containing a heat inducible promoter which was subsequently triparental mated to *Agrobacterium tumefaciens* (Armitage, P. 1988. Transformation of dicotyl plant cells using the Ti plasmid of *Agrobacterium tumefaciens* and Ri plasmid of *A. rhizogenes*. In: Plant Genetic Engineering and Gene Expression: A laboratory Manual. Draper, J., Scott, R., Armitage, P. and Welden, R. (Eds). Blackwell Scientific Publications, Oxford. pp69-160). The construct included a kanamycin resistant gene which can be used in screening of transformants.

Putative transformed seed (with the P5CR gene) were tested for the presence of kanamycin resistance to indicate transformation. Third generation transformed soybean seed and untransformed soybean seed were tested for germination viability on agar plates supplemented with kanamycin. It was noted that all the seeds germinated on agar plates with 0mg/l kanamycin (see Table 1 below). It was noted that as the concentration of kanamycin in the agar plates was increased, the percentage of germinating plants decreased. Some of the seed initially started to germinate for a short period before dying off and some of the germinating plants showed deformities. At the highest concentration of kanamycin in the agar plates, none of the untransformed soybean seeds germinated whereas in contrast 37.5% of the transformed soybean seeds were able to germinate successfully. The plants which germinated successfully were planted in a greenhouse and the results indicated that the transformed plants which germinated were most probably transformed with the P5CR gene.

Table 1: Germination of transformed soybean seed and untransformed control soybean seed on kanamycin supplemented agar plates

	0 mg/l km	25 mg/l km	35 mg/l km	50mg/l km
Untransformed soybean seed	100%	0%	0%	0%
Transformed soybean seed	100%	80%	75%	37.5%

km - kanamycin

The untransformed control plants and the transformed plants were subjected to a variety of tests including different physiological techniques e.g. proline accumulation and anatomical techniques e.g. woodenbox screening to compare the untransformed control plants with the transformed plants under drought and osmotic stress.

Inactivation of the P5CR gene resulted in decreased proline synthesis. The application of a mannitol stress test resulted in the untransformed control plants showing a significant increase in proline concentration whereas the antisense transformed plants displayed a significant decrease in proline concentration, indicating that the P5CR gene had been inactivated in the transformed plants and the transformed plants were unable to synthesise proline in response to the osmotic stress test.

The results of the tests indicate that antisense transformed plants were more drought sensitive than untransformed control plants, which indicates an underexpression of the P5CR gene, as a result of the antisense construct.

Control plants and fourth generation antisense transformed plants were subjected to a woodenbox experiment. Seed was planted in a box and watered until all plants reached the six leaf stage. At this stage the promoter was activated and drought stress was applied. The control plants survived a six day drought stress significantly more than most of the antisense transformed plants which died. The results indicate that soybean plants were successfully transformed with the antisense construct, as the transformed plants were unable to survive a drought stress test with a lower copy number of the proline gene (see Figure 4).

EXAMPLE 4

In order to test the reproducibility of the transformation method further, another soybean cultivar Ibis was transformed with a P5CR gene in sense and antisense direction. Essentially the same methods and techniques described above for Example 1 were used to transform the soybean cultivar Ibis with the P5CR gene. PCR demonstrated that transformation of the Ibis cultivar was successful. Sense and antisense transformants were evaluated physiologically to confirm transformation as well as the effect of the two different constructs on

Ibis. Detection of Ibis transformants was conducted using a chlorophyll fluorescence test. Changes in the photo system II activity of photosynthesis during drought stress can be analysed by measuring changes in different parameters of chlorophyll fluorescence.

5 The results of the chlorophyll fluorescence test are shown graphically in Figures 5A and 5B, in which the following abbreviations are used:

yO	-	A measurement of the ability of a trapped excitation to move an electron into electron transport.
ABS/RC	-	The absorption flux of photons per photosystem II (PSII) reaction centre (RC).
ABS/CSm	-	The absorption flux of photons per PSII cross section (CS).
TRo/RC	-	The rate at which an excitation is trapped by the RC.
ETo/RC	-	The electron transport per RC.
Dlo/RC	-	The energy flux, which is wasted per RC as heat or transfer to other systems.
RC/CSo	-	Reaction centre per cross section.
RC/CSm	-	An indication of the number of active RCAEs (density) per CS.
TRo/CSm	-	The rate at which an exciton is trapped by the CS.
ETo/CSm	-	The electron transport per CS.
Dlo/CSm	-	The energy flux, which is wasted per CSm as heat or transfer to other systems (Strasser B.J and Strasser R.J. 1995. Measuring fast fluorescence transients to address environmental questions: the JIP test. In: Photosynthesis: from light to biosphere (P.Mathis. Ed.) Vol. 5: 977-980. Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht. ISBN 0-7923-3862-6).

The antisense transformed plants (see Figure 5B) were subjected to stress tests which resulted in the antisense transformed plants increasing active

reaction centres, absorption, trapping and electron transport per cross section in compensating for stress imposed on the antisense transformed plants, whereas in contrast the sense transformed plants (see Figure 5A) when subjected to stress tests shut down certain reaction centres and there was a decrease in trapping, absorption and electron transport. The results indicated that sense transformed plants are better able to survive the stress tests as compared to the antisense transformed plants and control plants. Wasted energy per cross section was lower in the sense transformed plants than in the antisense transformed plants. The sense transformed plants contain a higher P5CR copy number and are therefore able to use energy more efficiently than the antisense transformed plants having a lower P5CR copy number. It appears that the sense transformed plants are more drought tolerant whereas the antisense transformed plants are more drought sensitive. These tests indicated that transformation of Ibis was successful.

EXAMPLE 5

In a further embodiment of the invention using essentially the same methods and techniques described above for Example 2, *Lupinus albus* seed (cultivar Esta) was transformed with *Agrobacterium* strain LBA4404 containing a p35S GUS INT gene. Figure 6 shows transformed lupin leaves of initial transformed seed, together with first generation seed compared to control plants, leaves and seeds. The transformed leaves and seed demonstrate blue colouring representing GUS-gene activity. This indicates that lupin was successfully transformed using the method according to the invention and that the GUS INT gene was successfully transferred at least to the first generation.

SUMMARY

The methods in accordance with the invention resulted in a transformation success rate of approximately 35% of the soybean seeds. This

is a relatively high transformation success rate in that conventional techniques usually only have a transformation success rate of less than 5%. By inserting a foreign gene or genes into a plasmid in *Agrobacterium tumefaciens*, the soybean seed may be transformed with the foreign gene. The foreign gene is then included in the cells of a soybean plant which grows from the transformed soybean seed and may then be inherited by its progeny.

Advantages of the invention are that the methods are relatively easy to carry out and relatively inexpensive compared to conventional transformation procedures and techniques. As no tissue culture steps are used in the methods according to the invention, it is believed that there will be little or no loss of genetic traits which would usually occur as a result of somatic mutations. The methods in accordance with the invention can be used for transforming any suitable plant seed with genes of interest or agricultural usefulness, for example, drought resistant or disease resistant genes. The methods in accordance with the invention can also be used for producing transgenic plants of other species where routine tissue culture procedures have not yet been established.

CLAIMS:

1. A method for obtaining transformed or genetically modified plant seed, the method including contacting germinating plant seed with a wetting agent or surfactant and an *Agrobacterium* strain to transform or genetically modify the plant seed.

2. A method as claimed in claim 1, in which the wetting agent or surfactant is a non-oil based wetting agent or surfactant.

3. A method as claimed in claim 1 or claim 2, in which the wetting agent or surfactant includes a polyether polymethyl siloxane copolymer.

4. A method as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, in which the *Agrobacterium* strain and the wetting agent or surfactant are in the form of an admixture, the wetting agent or surfactant and the *Agrobacterium* strain being present in the admixture in a mass ratio of the wetting agent or surfactant: *Agrobacterium* strain of between 1:99 and 1:10000.

5. A method as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, in which the germinating plant seed are subjected to vacuum infiltration while they are being contacted with the wetting agent or surfactant and the *Agrobacterium* strain.

6. A method as claimed in claim 5, in which the germinating plant seed are subjected to vacuum infiltration for a period of between 5 minutes and 40 minutes, at a pressure of between 150 Pa (a) and 750 Pa (a).

7. A method as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, in which the germinating plant seed are contacted with the wetting agent or surfactant and

the *Agrobacterium* strain for a period of between 2 hours and 48 hours, at a temperature of between 15 °C and 35 °C.

8. A method as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, in which the *Agrobacterium* strain is *Agrobacterium tumefaciens*.

5 9. A method as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, in which the *Agrobacterium* strain includes a foreign gene which includes appropriate regulatory sequences so as to be expressed in the cells of a plant which is cultivated from the transformed or genetically modified plant seed.

10 10. A method as claimed in claim 9, in which the foreign gene confers at least one of disease resistance and drought resistance to the plant which is cultivated from the transformed or genetically modified plant seed.

11. A method as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, in which the *Agrobacterium* strain includes a plasmid comprising vector pBI121.

15 12. A method as claimed in claim 9 or claim 10, in which the *Agrobacterium* strain includes a plasmid which includes both said foreign gene and a selection agent resistance gene, the selection agent resistance gene also including appropriate regulatory sequences so as to be expressed in the cells of the plant which is cultivated from the transformed or genetically modified plant seed.

20 13. A method as claimed in claim 12, in which the selection agent resistance gene codes for antibiotic resistance, thus imparting resistance to an antibiotic selection agent to the plant which is cultivated from the transformed or genetically modified plant seed.

14. A method as claimed in claim 13, in which the antibiotic selection agent is selected from the group consisting of at least one of kanamycin and rifampicin, and in which the selection agent resistance gene is a GUS-intron gene.

15. A method as claimed in any and of the preceding claims, in which the plant seed is from the family *leguminosae*.

16. A method as claimed in claim 15, in which the plant seed is soybean seed.

17. A method as claimed in claim 15, in which the plant seed is lupin seed.

18. A method as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, which includes germinating plant seed at a temperature of between 22 °C and 32 °C, for a period of between 2 days and 5 days, before contacting the germinating plant seed with the wetting agent or surfactant and the *Agrobacterium* strain.

19. A transformed or genetically modified plant seed produced by the method as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 18 inclusive.

20. A transformed or genetically modified plant cultivated from the plant seed as claimed in claim 19.

21. A plant seed produced by the transformed or genetically modified plant as claimed in claim 20.

22. A plant which is the progeny of a transformed or genetically modified plant as claimed in claim 20.

23. A transformation composition which includes, in admixture, an *Agrobacterium* strain and a wetting agent or surfactant.

24. A transformation composition as claimed in claim 23, in which the wetting agent or surfactant is a non-oil based wetting agent or surfactant.

5 25. A transformation composition as claimed in claim 23 or claim 24, in which the wetting agent or surfactant includes a polyether polymethyl siloxane copolymer, and in which the *Agrobacterium* strain is *Agrobacterium tumefaciens*.

10 26. A transformation composition as claimed in claim 25, in which the wetting agent or surfactant and the *Agrobacterium* strain are present in a mass ratio of the wetting agent or surfactant: *Agrobacterium* strain of between 1:99 and 1:10000.

27. A method for obtaining transformed or genetically modified plant seed as claimed in claim 1, substantially as herein described and illustrated.

15 28. A transformation composition as claimed in claim 23, substantially as herein described and illustrated.

29. A new method for obtaining transformed or genetically modified plant seed, a new transformation composition, a new plant seed, or a new plant, substantially as herein described.

Figure 1A

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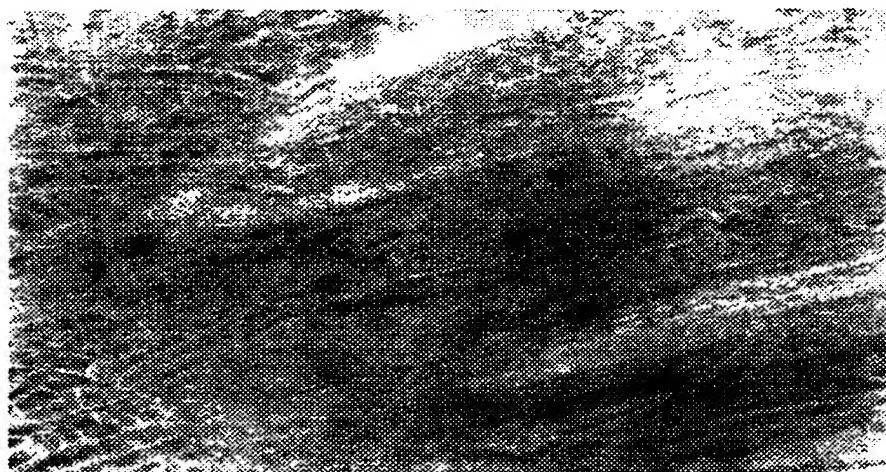


Figure 1B



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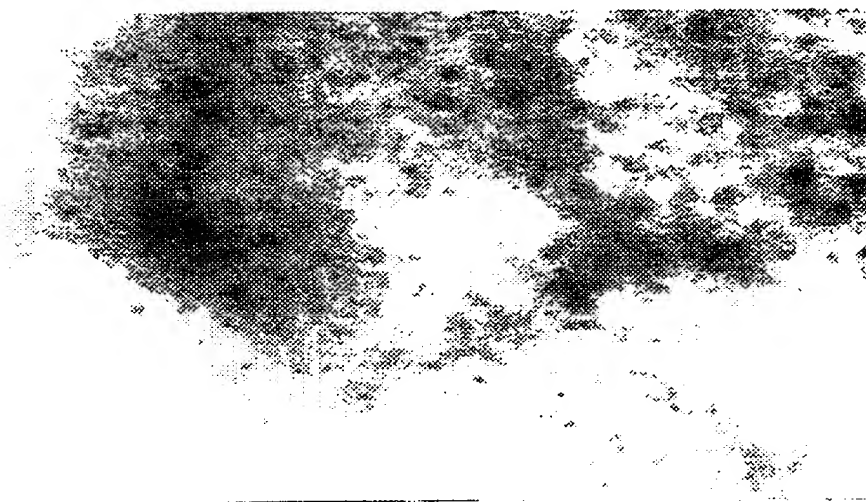


Figure 2

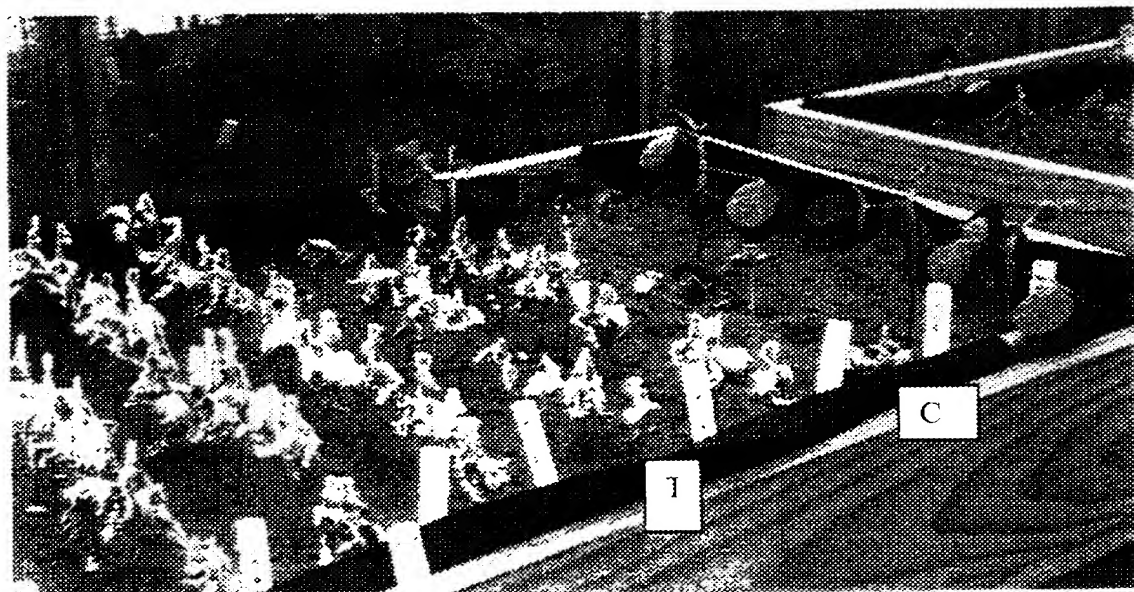


Figure 4

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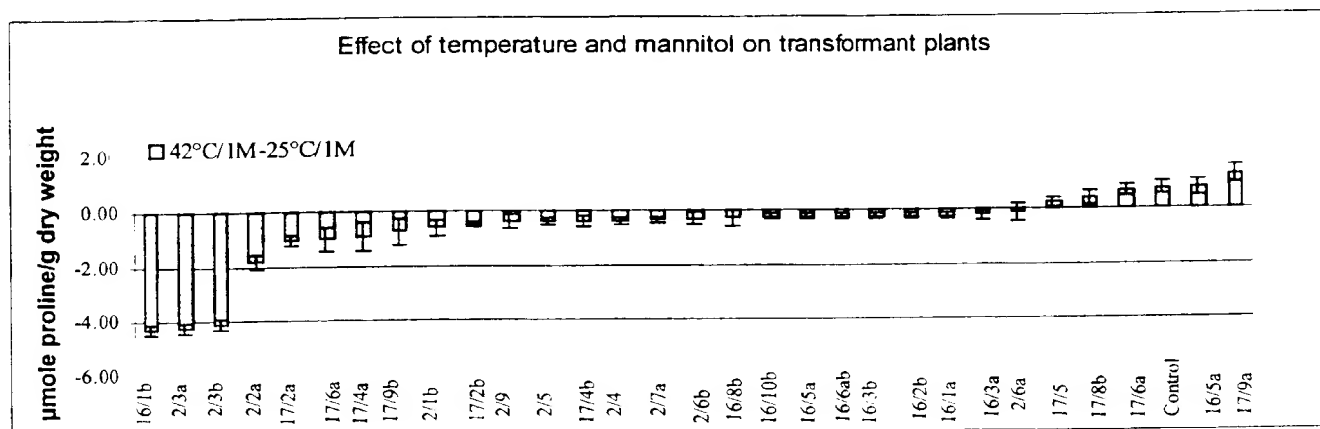


Figure 3

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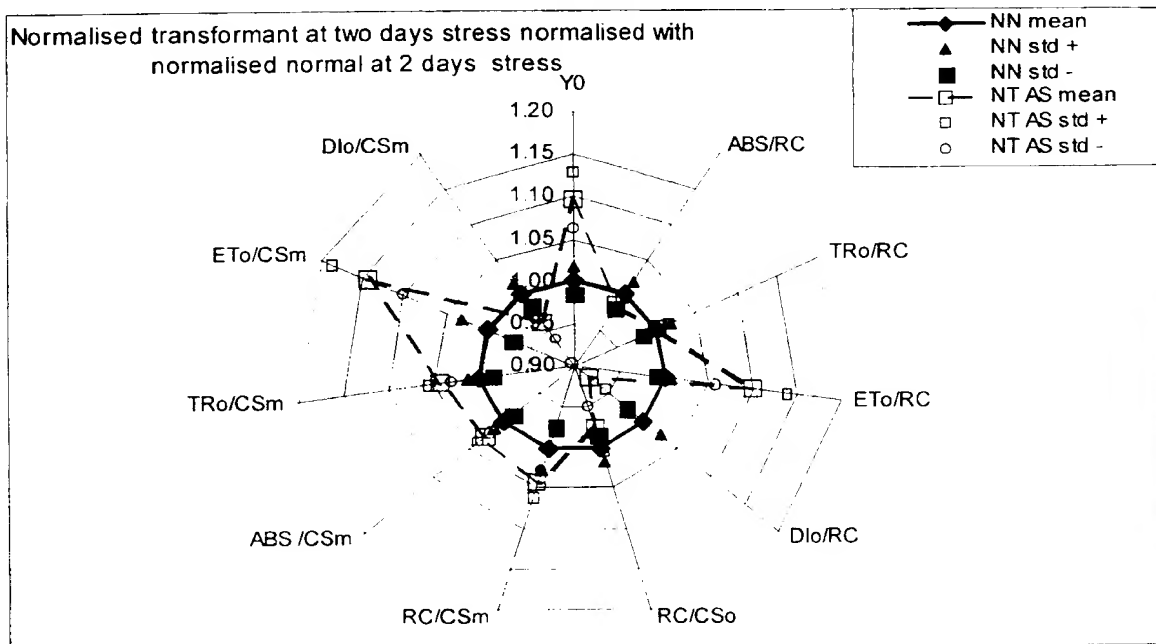


Figure 5A

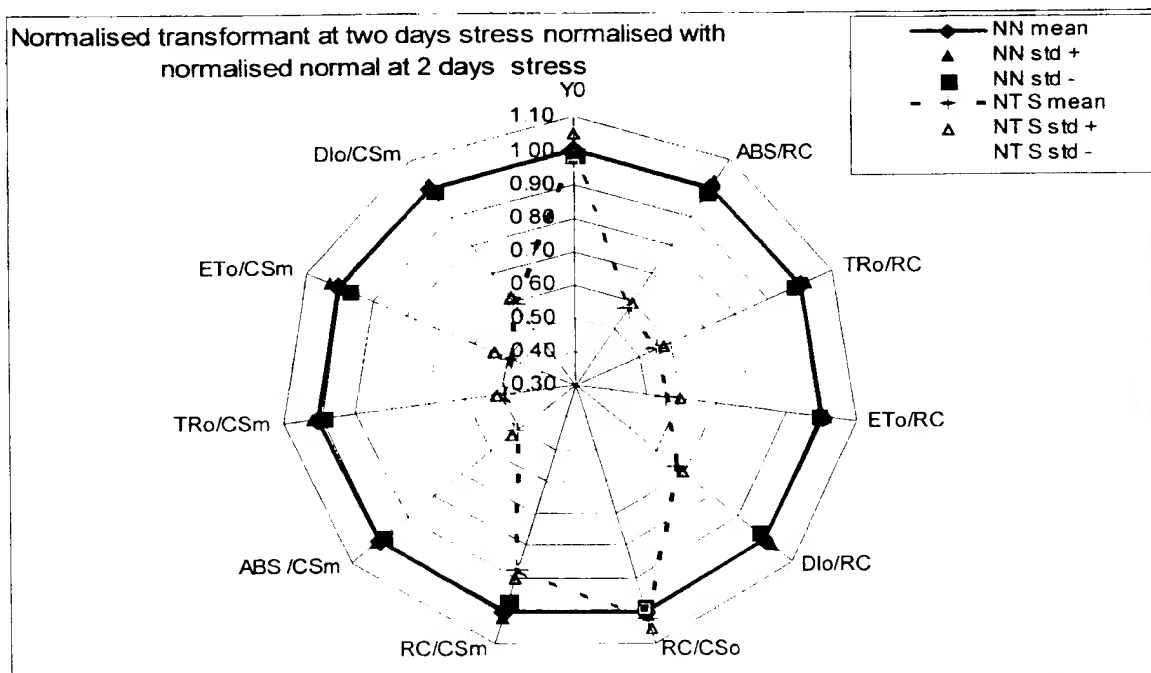


Figure 5B

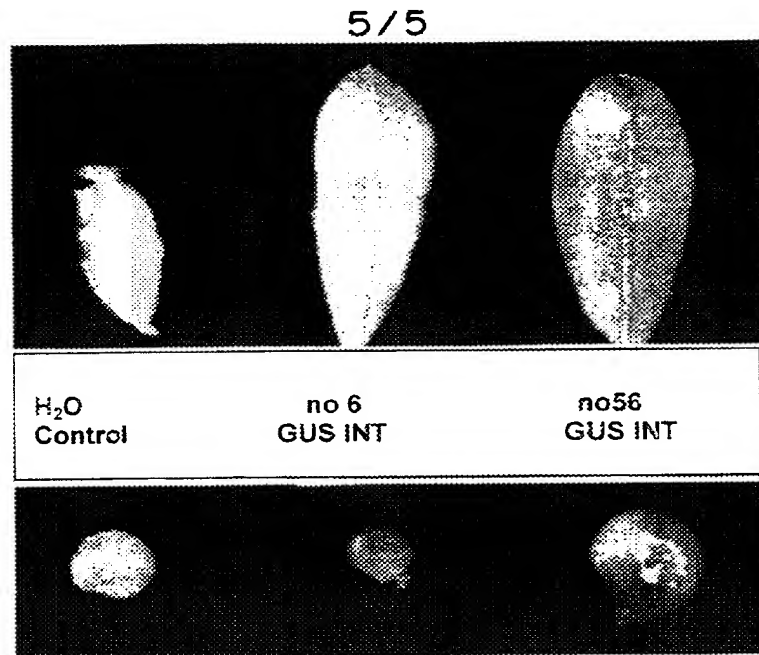


Figure 6

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No
PCT/IB 99/01676

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC 7 C12N15/82

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

IPC 7 C12N

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X A	WO 97 48814 A (MONSANTO CO) 24 December 1997 (1997-12-24) see especially pp.29-30 the whole document	19-29 1-4, 7-10, 12-14
X A	NL 8 801 444 A (SOLVAY) 2 January 1990 (1990-01-02) abstract see the claims page 5 -page 6	19-22, 27,29 1-4,9, 10,12-15
A	WO 98 37212 A (HALLUIN KATHLEEN D ; PLANT GENETIC SYSTEMS NV (BE)) 27 August 1998 (1998-08-27) the whole document -/-	

☒ Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.

☒ Patent family members are listed in annex.

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- "A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance
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- "X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone
- "Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art.
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Date of the actual completion of the international search

7 March 2000

Date of mailing of the international search report

21/03/2000

Name and mailing address of the ISA

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Oderwald, H

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No

PCT/IB 99/01676

C.(Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
P,X	<p>WO 99 14348 A (LEFEBVRE DANIEL D ;KO KENTON (CA); KO ZDENKA W (CA); TREMBLAY LIND) 25 March 1999 (1999-03-25)</p> <p>abstract; claims 1-3,8-17,20,22-28 page 1 -page 13</p>	<p>1,2, 7-10, 12-16, 19-24, 27-29</p>
P,A	<p>CLOUGH S J ET AL: "Floral dip: a simplified method for Agrobacterium-mediated transformation of Arabidopsis thaliana." PLANT JOURNAL, (1998 DEC) 16 (6) 735-43. JOURNAL CODE: BRU. , XP002132452 the whole document</p>	<p>1-29</p>

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International Application No

PCT/IB 99/01676

Patent document cited in search report		Publication date	Patent family member(s)	Publication date
WO 9748814	A	24-12-1997	AU 3402897 A CA 2230216 A CN 1208437 A CZ 9800867 A EP 0856060 A HU 9902123 A	07-01-1998 24-12-1997 17-02-1999 17-03-1999 05-08-1998 28-10-1999
NL 8801444	A	02-01-1990	NONE	
WO 9837212	A	27-08-1998	AU 6002798 A CA 2252612 A EP 0900279 A	09-09-1998 27-08-1998 10-03-1999
WO 9914348	A	25-03-1999	AU 9058498 A	05-04-1999

PATENT COOPERATION TREATY

PCT

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

(PCT Article 18 and Rules 43 and 44)

Applicant's or agent's file reference F14602 LVDW	FOR FURTHER ACTION <small>see Notification of Transmittal of International Search Report (Form PCT/ISA/220) as well as, where applicable, Item 5 below.</small>	
International application No. PCT/IB 99/01676	International filing date (day/month/year) 14/10/1999	(Earliest) Priority Date (day/month/year) 15/10/1998
Applicant PROTEIN RESEARCH TRUST et al		

This International Search Report has been prepared by this International Searching Authority and is transmitted to the applicant according to Article 18. A copy is being transmitted to the International Bureau.

This International Search Report consists of a total of 3 sheets.
☒ It is also accompanied by a copy of each prior art document cited in this report.

1. Basis of the report

a. With regard to the **language**, the international search was carried out on the basis of the international application in the language in which it was filed, unless otherwise indicated under this item.

☐ the international search was carried out on the basis of a translation of the international application furnished to this Authority (Rule 23.1(b)).

b. With regard to any **nucleotide and/or amino acid sequence** disclosed in the international application, the international search was carried out on the basis of the sequence listing:

☐ contained in the international application in written form.

☐ filed together with the international application in computer readable form.

☐ furnished subsequently to this Authority in written form.

☐ furnished subsequently to this Authority in computer readable form.

☐ the statement that the subsequently furnished written sequence listing does not go beyond the disclosure in the international application as filed has been furnished.

☐ the statement that the information recorded in computer readable form is identical to the written sequence listing has been furnished.

2. ☐ **Certain claims were found unsearchable** (See Box I).

3. ☐ **Unity of invention is lacking** (see Box II).

4. With regard to the **title**,

☒ the text is approved as submitted by the applicant.

☐ the text has been established by this Authority to read as follows:

5. With regard to the **abstract**,

☒ the text is approved as submitted by the applicant.

☐ the text has been established, according to Rule 38.2(b), by this Authority as it appears in Box III. The applicant may, within one month from the date of mailing of this international search report, submit comments to this Authority.

6. The figure of the **drawings** to be published with the abstract is Figure No. _____

☐ as suggested by the applicant.

☐ because the applicant failed to suggest a figure.

☐ because this figure better characterizes the invention.

☐ None of the figures.

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

national Application No

T/IB 99/01676

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
IPC 7 C12N15/82

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)
IPC 7 C12N

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"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention

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"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art.

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Date of the actual completion of the international search

7 March 2000

Date of mailing of the international search report

21/03/2000

Name and mailing address of the ISA

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Fax: (+31-70) 340-3016

Authorized officer

Oderwald, H

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No

T/IB 99/01676

C.(Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category °	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
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P,A	CLOUGH S J ET AL: "Floral dip: a simplified method for Agrobacterium-mediated transformation of Arabidopsis thaliana." PLANT JOURNAL, (1998 DEC) 16 (6) 735-43. JOURNAL CODE: BRU. , XP002132452 the whole document -----	1-29

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International Application No

PCT/IB 99/01676

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			CA 2230216	A	24-12-1997
			CN 1208437	A	17-02-1999
			CZ 9800867	A	17-03-1999
			EP 0856060	A	05-08-1998
			HU 9902123	A	28-10-1999
NL 8801444	A	02-01-1990	NONE		
WO 9837212	A	27-08-1998	AU 6002798	A	09-09-1998
			CA 2252612	A	27-08-1998
			EP 0900279	A	10-03-1999
WO 9914348	A	25-03-1999	AU 9058498	A	05-04-1999